

Our Year in Review

2021-22

Vermont Land
Trust



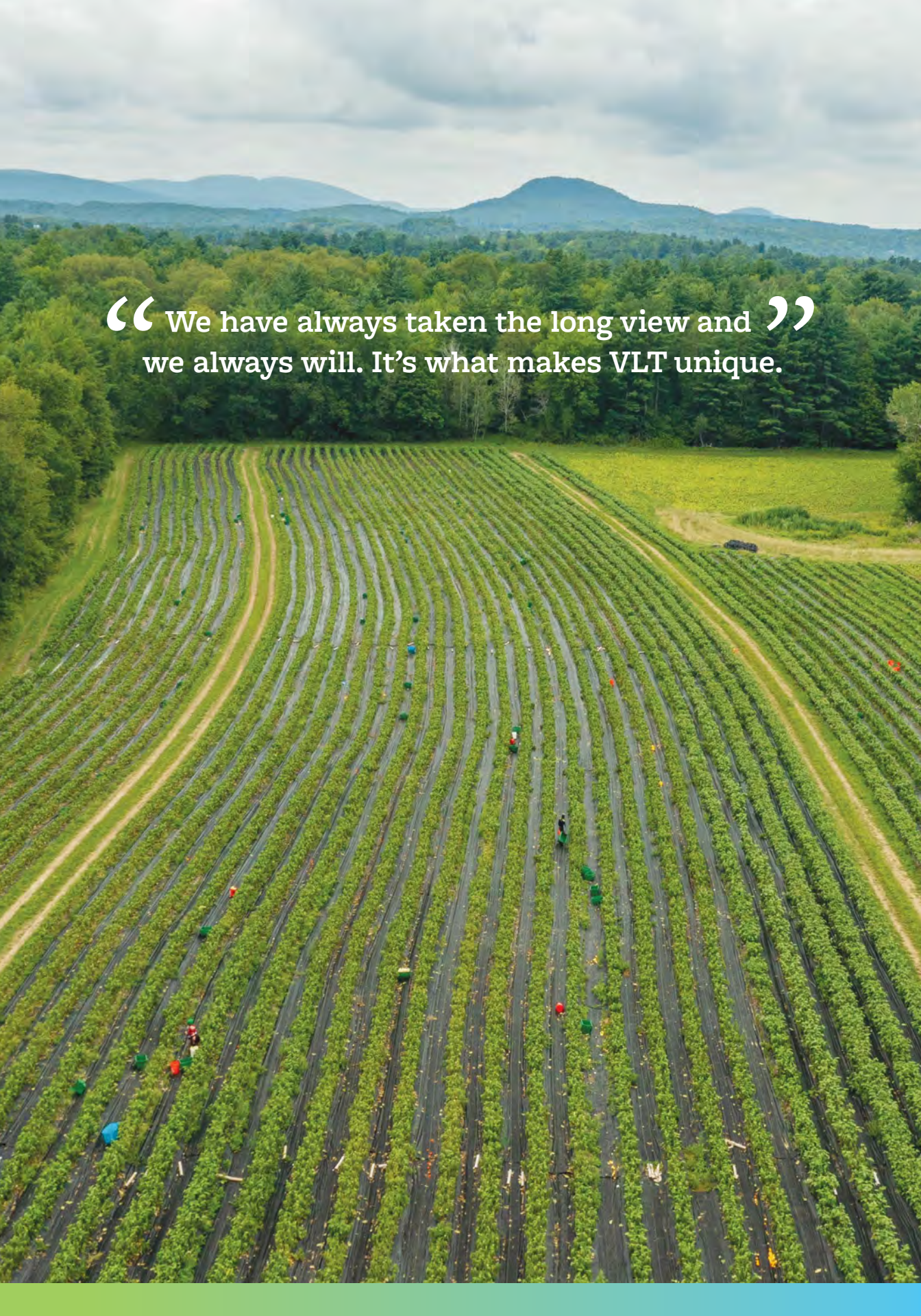


In Honor of
Carl Powden
1954-2022

A farmer, teacher, state legislator and, from 1993, a conservationist with VLT, Carl Powden led a life of service and helped protect over 200,000 acres. Known for his wisdom and wit, he had a deep love and respect for the people who make a living from the land.

Carl passed away unexpectedly this year, a tragic loss for the VLT community and beyond. We are honored to have worked alongside Carl and learned from him, and we strive to continue his good work.





“ We have always taken the long view and ”
we always will. It’s what makes VLT unique.

Dear Friends,

In what feels like a blink, autumn leaves have fallen and the harvest is in. It’s time to take stock and plan for the future. What have we reaped? What seeds will we sow for next season?

As we mark our 45th Anniversary, these questions take on generational meaning. We just conserved our one-thousandth farm! Many of the farms we protected early on have changed hands or shifted operation, but the land continues to thrive and produce next year’s harvest.

We have always taken the long view and we always will. It’s what makes VLT unique.

Looking ahead to the next 45 years, the questions feel daunting. How will climate change affect our lands, the plants and animals, and the people who call Vermont home? How will we ensure that all people can afford to live, work the land, and enjoy our state?

Every investment we make now will yield benefits in the decades to come. This year we protected over 6,500 acres of working forest in Worcester and Elmore within a wildlife corridor running from the Green Mountains to Nova Scotia. It supports more than 200 acres of wetlands, and miles of streams that flow into Lake Champlain.

In the future, this forestland will continue to make our communities more resilient to floods, provide forest products, support biodiversity, and store carbon.

We need to accelerate the pace of this work.

The same is true for farmland protection—particularly with skyrocketing land prices. Protecting farmland from development remains a focus, along with helping new and beginning farmers buy land. Today, we’re building on this and striving to create equitable entry-points for all farmers, including first-generation farmers, people from historically marginalized or oppressed communities, and others with limited means.

Thanks to you, the seeds we have planted through consistent, dogged conservation continue to bear fruit. A source of economic activity, climate resilience, and community connection, conserved lands are a hallmark of Vermont—and will continue to be for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Nick Richardson
President & CEO



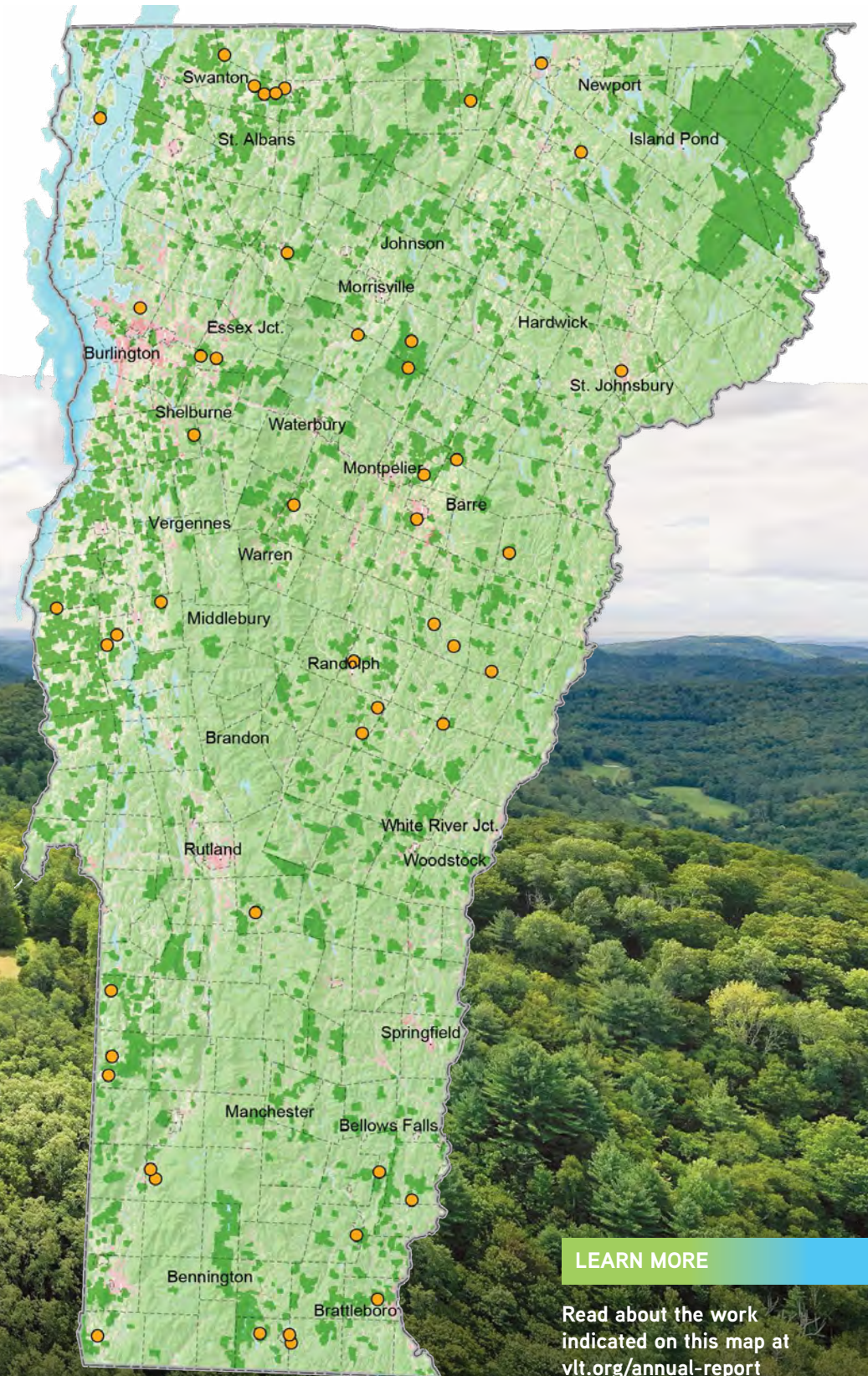
Cheryl Morse
Chair, Board of Trustees



Our Work This Year

Contributed to the
protection of
13,500+ acres

Over 45 years,
we have conserved
624,305 acres



[LEARN MORE](#)

Read about the work
indicated on this map at
vlt.org/annual-report

Our Work This Year 2021-22

7,100+ new acres conserved

Farms that sustain us

We conserved productive farmland, helped retiring farmers find beginning farmers to buy their farms, and used conservation strategies to keep farmland affordable. Among nearly 20 farm projects this year, Linn Hazen conserved his North Hero farm and sold it to farmers raising beef and heifers; the Hodges family protected their popular Cornwall orchard; and Jamie Rivers and Laura Clark made sure their Troy dairy will be affordable to future farmers.



2,000+ acres
protected

15 parcels
conserved

Clean water and healthy soil

Our five-year soil health study got underway; baseline data on pasture conditions was collected for 1,200 acres of farmland. We removed a 70-year-old dam and are restoring a wetland in Colchester, protected land along 35 miles of river and streambank, and with the help of volunteers, planted native trees and shrubs along some of them.



20+ farms
enrolled in
soil-health study

3,900+ trees
planted along wetlands,
rivers, and streams

Forests and wildlife habitat

Completing our years-long effort to protect thousands of acres of working forest in central Vermont was the highlight of our work supporting woodlands and the forest economy. We conserved more than 15 forest parcels across the state, including valuable wildlife habitat such as the Lily Pond Highlands in Windham County and land added to the Kesick Swamp Wildlife Management Area in Sunderland.



5,000+ acres
of new forestland
conservation

Completed multi-year
effort to protect
6,500+ acres
in central Vermont

Land for all

We helped communities protect six places where people can explore nature, learn about the outdoors, and relish Vermont's beauty. Among these is Observatory Knob, a scenic hilltop property walkable from downtown St. Johnsbury, and the Ashley Community Forest in Sharon and Strafford—the first town forest owned and managed across town lines. On land we own, 100+ families benefited from community gardens and 35+ New American families received culturally significant food at lowered cost.



7,700+ pounds
of produce grown
for people in need

6 new places
for learning and recreation

One of a Kind

Passionate support for a model forest

When news spread of a proposed development across fields and woods in four central Vermont towns, concerned residents came together to offer a different vision. They formed the Alliance for Vermont Communities (AVC) and rallied people across town lines—one result was the creation of the Ashley Community Forest.

The group won the hearts of their neighbors—and raised nearly \$300,000 in three months!—to protect 256 acres in Sharon and Strafford.

“We organized workshops, outings, and walks to get people familiar with the land—everything from poetry workshops to events for kids,” says AVC’s Michael Sacca. “We got the word out, and it was really successful.”

AVC bought the land and, with help from us and a grant from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, conserved and donated it to the towns. The resulting Ashley Community Forest is one-of-a-kind: a co-managed town forest rooted in deep collaboration.

Passion for the forest continues to grow: events fill up fast as people explore the land’s many cellar holes, stone walls, open meadows, and spectacular trees.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/ashley

“ People volunteered; people wanted to see this happen. ”
They were really fantastic about stepping up.
There were a lot of hands in this.

Michael Sacca, community member and President, Alliance for Vermont Communities

Gaining Farmland and Stability

A lasting relationship with the land

"If I gave anyone advice starting out, it would be to be all in one spot," says Andy Paonessa of Heartwood Farm in Albany.

He should know. He leased land for more than a decade to make his organic veggie and maple syrup business work—traveling between plots, with little ability to improve the land year over year.

When Andy and Marina decided to have children, finding a homebase for their business, and their family, became increasingly appealing. So when a neighboring farm was about to go up for sale, they worked with us to buy and conserve it.

"We can now manage it how we need to," Andy says. "We could never do that before."

The welcome change comes as the couple raise their son, Cosmo. "We see ourselves as stewards of the land," Andy adds, "and later someone else will take care of it... maybe Cosmo."

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/heartwood

“ We couldn’t have purchased this farm without financial help from VLT. It’s exciting, because now we can think long-term. ”

Marina Carleton, Heartwood Farm

Making Space

Nurturing the Towhee and Vermont's other shrubland birds

The song of the eastern towhee begins with a few introductory notes and ends with a long trill, referred to in the birding world as “drink-your-teeaaa” (or “to-wheweee”).

Like other shrubland birds that thrive in brushy areas, the towhee population in the northeast has declined. As old pastures transition to young forests, shrubland birds are losing habitat. The loss is exacerbated by deer eating young native shrubs and invasive plants taking over.

At VLT's Whetstone Woods in Brattleboro, islands of shrubland bird habitat are being created in an old pasture. After the invasive plants were brought under control, volunteers joined us to plant 300 native shrubs. We are also using natural sprays to deter deer.

“The idea is to knock back the invasives and get native shrubs going,” says forester Pieter van Loon, “to help create permanent shrubland habitat.”

In years to come, we will work with Vermont Audubon on a birding trail through the property, so visitors can thrill to the sound of the towhee's “drink-your-teeaaa” song.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/whetstone



“Our hope is to show that it's possible to create space for these amazing birds.”

Pieter van Loon, lead forester at VLT

From the Ground Up

Seeking climate solutions on the farm

Climate change affects us all. Farmers see its impact on the land firsthand. Persistent drought and more intense storms make farming more complex—and less predictable.

We are working with livestock farmers and scientists on a five-year, statewide study of soil-friendly practices that can boost the land's ability to adapt and sustain productive farming.

The core practice is rotational grazing.

"It adds a whole other layer of complexity," says participating farmer Melanie Harrison of Harrison's Homegrown in Addison. "But the cows do better when they get outside. It's good for their health. It can also increase costs with the extra infrastructure of laneways, waterlines, and fencing," says Melanie.

The farmers receive technical help and payment for the practices they implement, so they can invest in changes that would otherwise be challenging.

"We're learning from farmers what's working and how we can innovate," says VLT's Annalise Carington. "Ultimately, we want Vermont farms to thrive. What do farmers need to make that happen long-term?"

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/harrisons

“ I think about climate change every day. We don't count on anything or take anything for granted. We've got to be ready to adapt to change as it comes. ”

Melanie Harrison, dairy farmer

Welcome Sign

Abenaki community leads restoration effort

Just a few miles from Vermont's northern border, Lake Memphremagog meets the shores of a peninsula known as Indian Point. The site of an Abenaki fishing village until the mid-1800s, the land has always been significant to the local Abenaki community, who have cared for it for centuries. Now, Abenaki citizens are expanding that stewardship at VLT's Bluffside Farm in Newport.

"To some extent, we're coming back home," says Dan Coutu, a member of the Nulhegan Abenaki band.

Dan and other indigenous volunteers came together to plant native species along a wetland. They selected plants that provide ecological or medicinal benefits, plants that are sacred to the Abenaki, and some that will benefit wildlife. You'll also find wild rose—an Abenaki sign of welcome that was suggested by late tribal elder Bea Nelson.

"The project has had a lot of meaning to people in the tribe," says Dan. "Meanwhile, everyone benefits from an environment that is healthy and thriving the way that it ought to."

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/bluffside

“ This is important work because it highlights ”
the fact that, as human beings, we are a part of the Earth.
We have a responsibility to it and all those plants and
animals that depend on the land—including ourselves.

Dan Coutu, member of the Nulhegan Abenaki

Financial Information

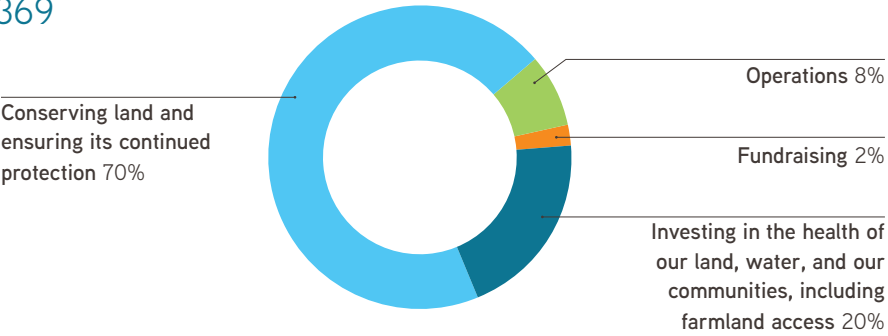
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Find more information at vlt.org/annual-report

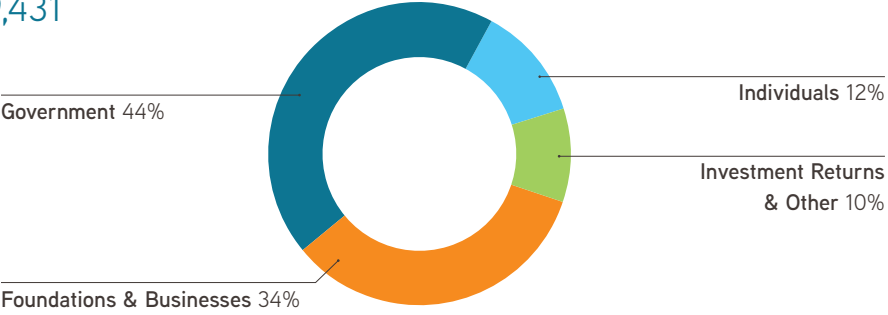
Fiscal year overview

Our net assets for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022 increased from \$42 million to \$46 million, and include land holdings, endowments, and restricted project funds. Over 60% of VLT’s net assets are considered restricted. We saw this increase despite the lingering pandemic, volatile investment markets, and inflation. Two revenue events, the conservation and sale of over 6,500 acres of working forest in Worcester and Elmore, and a \$6 million gift from the High Meadows Fund, contributed to this growth. Declines in our invested endowments were offset by an unprecedented 20% growth in individual donations, plus new land transactions, helping to further diversify our revenue.

Uses of Funds \$24,101,369



Sources of Funds \$28,009,431



The Vermont Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization. These financial statements are unaudited. Once completed, final financial statements and accompanying auditor’s report will be available on request from our Montpelier office at (802) 223-5234.



Thank you to all the funders and partners who support the protection of Vermont’s landscape.

Bafflin Foundation	Lookout Foundation	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife	VLT’s Farmland Futures Fund
Davis Conservation Foundation	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and their New England Forests and Rivers Fund	U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program	Watersheds United Vermont
Ducks Unlimited	Northern Forest Center	Vermont Community Foundation	White River Partnership
Hollis Declan Leverett Memorial Fund, Bank of America N.A., Trustee	Open Space Institute	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and their Ecosystem Restoration Program	William P. Wharton Foundation
Environmental Protection Agency	Taylor Valley Fund	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department’s Vermont Habitat Stamp Program	Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District
Fields Pond Foundation	Town of Hinesburg	Vermont Housing & Conservation Board	Windham Foundation
Freeman Foundation	Town of Jericho Conservation Reserve Fund	Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council	Other private foundations, businesses, individuals, and VLT members
Friends of the Winooski River	Town of Middlebury		
Jericho Underhill Land Trust	Town of St. Johnsbury		
Lawson’s Finest Liquids Sunshine Fund	Town of Stowe		
	USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service		

Thank you, VLT community!

Every day, we work to protect Vermont from the ground up. We could not do this without the passion and commitment of our supporters. This year, **3,500+** families and individuals donated to VLT. Thank you for being part of our community!



“VLT’s Bluffsides Farm has had a huge positive impact on our day-to-day life. It’s so wonderful to have such a beautiful place that makes biking, walking, and skiing accessible for our three generations ranging from 6 to 78.”

Jill Brewer

Sustaining member since 2020



“I believe in everything that VLT stands for. I greatly appreciate seeing the open spaces as well as forested areas, and want future generations to continue to enjoy what makes Vermont such a special place.”

Alan Binnick

Member since 2008



Credits

Photos

Front cover: VLT staffer Allaire Diamond saving a turtlehead plant, a native species in Vermont, for later replanting at a wetland restoration site; by Kyle Gray. Back cover: Community gardeners at Pine Island Community Farm; by Caleb Kenna. Interior: Photo of Carl Powden on inside front cover by Terry J. Allen. Pp. 3 (left), 6 (bottom), 7 (bottom), 14-15, 19, and inside back cover by Caleb Kenna. Pp. 3 (right) and 7 (top) by David Middleton. Pp. 1, 2, 4-5, 8-9, 10-11, and 16-17 by Kyle Gray. P. 6 (top) by Paul E. Richardson.

Stories

Rachel Mullis pp. 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16.

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